



## National Park Service – Fire Education, Prevention and Information Communication & Education - Year One Evaluation

Name (Optional):

Position (Optional):

National Park Service Site:

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### 1. What guidance and support have you received from the Fire Education Program or Fire Education Prevention and Information Specialist position?

XXXX has been very engaged in helping communicate fire management activities both internally and externally for XXX. He has developed a Prescribed Fire Communications Plan for our burn plans as well as continually updating the Notification Lists needed for burn projects.

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As with a number of programs, Dispatch, Suppression, Fuels, Fire Effects, GIS and Fire Prevention/Education, The XXX and XXX are a totally integrated Interagency Fire Management Program. With the addition of the XXX Fire Education/Prevention position are emphasis on Fire Education/ Prevention, has greatly increased with a noticeable results. In 2002 this position coordinated and planned the use of an SCA crew working with the local cooperators (county and state) in Firewise education in the wildland/urban interface areas in XXX County.

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This position is integral to our multi-agency approach to public education in this community. Each agency is dependent upon one another to bring perspective to our programs. Through our team approach we can collectively produce programs which affect broader prevention behavior changes in our citizens.

Our programs have not received specific support, but throughout the park and town we see lots of informative and interesting information about fires and the fire program. We all benefit from public support of the fire program - without it, we are not able to burn and therefore maintain the ecological integrity of the park.

- The program has been invaluable in getting information disseminated to parks' staff regarding training opportunities, fire incident developments (including maps/photos), "How - To" fire related topics, and getting fire represented in a number of educational components at the Park level. There has been a history of non-communication regarding fire program developments in the past between fire management and other divisions, and parks. I saw great strides in bridging those gaps. It has been amazing to see the response of now-informed park staff vis a vis fire program issues/developments. ("I never knew...")
- XXXX has facilitated a number of important meetings to stimulate an indifferent staff to take steps towards proactive wildland fire prevention. (There has been a long-standing attitude

that "fire doesn't happen here" - even though there was a large conflagration here.) Through perseverance and education, we will be hosting an "inter-divisional" preparedness review with our regional structural fire chief, the local fire brigade, the safety officer and the fire management staff. We will be looking at developing a much needed improved evacuation plan in addition to reaching out to our local communities at risk

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The FEPIS position has been a great addition to the NPS fire program in XXX. XXXX has implemented several projects that will help to foster a better understanding of fire both within and outside the park service. These include:

- Providing updates on fire activity, photos, maps and fire information during a busy fire season via e-mail and bulletin boards.
  - Actively involved in XXX FireWise team and urban-interface wildfire prevention program. Disseminates newsletters and encourages involvement.
  - Pro-active in working to include fire and fire effects in Visitor Center exhibits and displays.
  - Facilitating the development of fire ecology and fire environment web pages.
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I received help in the preparation of a Powerpoint presentation. I am also kept up-to-date by the Specialist on press releases, NPS notices and a range of information addressing fire issues. The Education Specialist spoke to community groups at pre-project presenting fire safety information relevant to rural subdivision residents.

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We received the Fire Education plan for possible incorporation into our site programs at XXX and XXX. The concept was also shared with park partners.

We received multiple copies of the newspaper insert on Fire Prevention in XXX to share with staff, volunteers and the public. This was very useful and well presented. Also, since XXX works closely with other land managing agencies on fire, the whole integrated picture was helpful.

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Chief of Interpretation has provided guidance and timely press release review and actual releases of newsworthy items XXX has written up for the park. Releases have gone out radio, newspaper and television.

Archeologist has provided Native American Consultation information, preservation of cultural resources information, and steps necessary for protecting cultural resources during prescribed burns.

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The Fire Education Prevention and Information Specialist position has supported the park through participation in the park's Public Information function, writing press releases, handling the press both in person and via telephone inquiries, assisting with public information relating to fatalities, search and rescues and other emergency situations. The position also is assisting in better organizing the public information function through improved information resources.

The position has definitely taken a load off the PIO by assuming the role of lead FIO including participation in public meetings.

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In 2001, fire restrictions were implemented in the park in April. The restrictions lasted through October. Obviously, there was heightened interest in drought and fire conditions. Small lightning caused fires in the park, a natural and normal occurrence, received a lot of public and media interest. In July, the XXX fire came close to the park's furthest east boundary. As the park's public information officer, I can attest that XXX guidance and support was invaluable during all of this. We worked as a team in responding to the community and the media and preparing our messages. XXX has also been proactive with the media and community about proactive steps we are taking to lessen fire danger, such as pile burning. XXX is knowledgeable about fire and is a good communicator. Those qualities and attributes in XXX make my job much easier. XXX encouraged me to take S-203 in November, to learn more about fire information.

## 2. What are the fire communication/education program goals for your area/site?

I have to admit I don't know.... Sorry!

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The goals I see for the area of influence for the XXX are to increase the awareness of the public and employees of the agencies in the processes of fire in a fire dependant ecosystem while also educating them on the importance of them taking responsibility for protecting their property and investments from wildfire.

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We have a strong Wildland/Urban Interface Program which we continue to refine and expand. Our goal at the county level is to increase the number of program contacts by 30% in the next year.

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None for Geologic resources, however, we are conducting research on the effects of fire on wildlife and would like our results to be shared.

- Preparedness and readiness education: Develop awareness on fire danger ratings/severity as related to the Danger Rating System
    - FIREWISE educational program presented to communities at risk. Create partnerships.
    - Preparedness Information dissemination - via bulletin boards, email, newsletters, etc.
  - Fire Ecology Education: Disseminate information about on-going facts, findings, studies, etc. with fire monitoring and science, in addition to presenting the role of fire in ecosystems to employees, visitors and local communities.
  - Incident Information: Improve information dissemination through inter-divisional partnerships (Interpretation), as well as using old and new technology - bulletin boards, newsletters, dispatch, email, websites (links), etc.
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Goals I envisioned for the XXX FEPI program are:

- a. to educate park staff on the role of fire in each parks ecosystem
  - b. to provide an avenue for basic fire science/ecology to be distributed to the public
  - c. to provide an avenue for fire information and fire activity to be disseminated to park staff and public during an active fire season
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Education about fire, as a natural process and also management issue, is a critical issue at XXX interpretive sites. The goals are to effectively present the central role fire plays in a healthy forest through waysides, informational fliers, interpretive programming and discussion points in the education programs, support controlled burning plans in the area with interpretive tools, assist in community outreach and education

Chief of Interpretation-Continue with fire information presentations, open houses act.

Cultural Resource Specialist-Communicate our concerns and methods of preservation of cultural sites.

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The goal is to provide park visitors, park staff, local residents, and park concession staff with current park and NPS fire information. The position serves as the park's Lead Fire Information Officer. Other goals relate to developing fire related curriculum for local schools, interpretive programs, brochures, and displays.

**3. How does the fire communication/education program at your site involve other park divisions?**

XXX works with the Public Information office as well as members of the Resource Division.

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The program works closely with the fire prevention/education officers of the forest and XXX County Fire Department and with the Public Affairs office of the agencies involved.

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I don't know specifically how the program involves other park divisions. I do know that we are in regular contact with our park and forest partners concerning our activities.

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While we are not intimately involved in the fire education program, it is obvious that the fire education program works with all Divisions to disseminate information and updates on fires and fire planning. Specifically, the fire education program involves employees from our division, visitor protection, and interpretation. The program is inherently inter-divisional.

- The educational component of fire is working in concert with the fire "operational" staff to be involved in other division affairs that have some involvement or are somehow affected by fire. For example, the Ranger Division is responsible for the structural brigade - in the event of a wildfire, it is imperative to educate both structural/wildland staff what each discipline's roles and responsibilities/capabilities. With the Interpretive Staff - discussion about the implementation of the hazard fuels program - visitors will be asking "why are you cutting "all" of the trees?" - Educating our own staff will be of big service, so that the frontline folks are informed and aren't disseminating misinformation which (still) happens all too frequently. These are just two examples, however we have been working in many other areas in this regard, and plan on doing more.
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The recent success story written about the integration of fire and cultural resources within the XXX zone demonstrated not only the integration of the fire program with other divisions, but provided an avenue for more people to know about the project.

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The presentations made to the community groups assisted the park in meeting NEPA conditions of approval for the WUI projects. The Education Specialist works closely with the FMO and Fuels Specialist in getting notice out to the public and press about upcoming prescribed fires. The Specialist solicited articles from the various divisions to contribute to a newspaper supplement XX prepared.

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At this time, we provide general interpretive support and specific support when controlled burning or fuel management is underway to other divisions.

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Both specialists comment that they are aware of the position and coordinate with the fire education information position as needed.

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The program works closely with the Division of Interpretation. Interpretation has provided training and guidance especially in the area of publications and design. Interpretation has also provided input in the development of temporary exhibits. The program has been involved with the Public Information function as previously mentioned. There may be involvement with other divisions that I am not aware of.

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Open lines of communication between the Superintendent's Office and the fire communication/education program specialist. XXX also developed a communication tree when certain fire activities are taking place in the park.

**4. Where do you think your site's program and the national program need to go? Please explain.**

I would like to see more emphasis on Fire as a resource management tool – not just a hazard fuel reduction tool. The public needs to understand better the need for natural fire on the landscape. Environmental groups need to be educated to understand that without some mechanical / prescribed fire treatments in strategic locations, the natural process of Fire will not be possible in back country areas. I think the NPS needs to take the high road and not always fall in line with the other agencies. We are here to protect the resource.... Not JUST our neighbors!

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I believe that the local and national programs need to continue with growth and support as are efforts in fire and fuels management programs are under the scrutiny of the public and the congress and senate. It is very important that we now even work harder and support the 10 yr comprehensive plan from the Western Governors in collaboration efforts between federal and local and state agencies.

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I believe that this program is very late in coming from a national perspective. Local fire departments have effectively reduced the number of fires in our country through strong prevention and education programs. This position is a natural fit to an overall national fire prevention emphasis, particularly in areas such as ours where federal presence is so large.

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More education outside the parks. Most people and media representatives are simply ignorant of fire and its key role in many ecosystems. They see fire as simply bad. Eliminate Smokey! Today, he just confuses people.

- I think the program needs to think how it is going to develop future Specialists. Who is filling these positions? Where are they coming from? How are we mentoring/developing new staff to replace incumbents when they move on or retire? I don't see a career ladder either. To alleviate the workload, maybe the program needs to consider seasonal or STF staff where we're developing our future 9/11 Specialists.
- We need to get away from the notion of "good" fire/ "bad" fire. Fire is just an environmental force that humans have to contend. The effects of fire create emotional subjective labels, but fire is indifferent, just like tornadoes. Do we say good tornadoes/bad tornadoes? No, although we would all agree from our human-values standpoint that tornadoes are bad because homes get destroyed, people lose lives, etc. This is where education is very important - in order to contend with fires/tornadoes, humans need to understand that both happen at varying intervals, why they happen, and how we as humans can mitigate the risks in living in fire/tornado prone areas.
- What is the Specialist National Strategic Plan? Where is the program going, and what does it want to accomplish? As a user, it certainly isn't clear to me, so I've just included the program into areas where the Specialist and I see fit. However, without a consolidated approach, is the program going to be able to measure its effectiveness, usefulness? In the



age of XXX and tightening budgets, it would behoove the Specialist collective to be able to identify concrete goals and develop "quantifiable" objectives.

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The park and the national program should be expanded to actively promote defensible space and adequate setbacks from federal property by supporting and encouraging local planning agencies to institute or enforce fire protection common sense standards when granting permits. Fire Education Specialist should lobby local government planning and city management offices to encourage local government to actively participate in the WUI program. Federal agencies will not be able effectively reduce fire hazard if agencies are facing continued expansion of development on the interface.

On a more local, park level, it would be great if the education program was a bit more nuts and bolts and play a more active role as a team member in implementing park and WUI-funded projects. Education Specialist would be perfect contributors to helping project managers take projects out to local residents, soliciting input, preparing site notices and interpretive information and acting, where appropriate, as press contacts for projects.

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Support program by providing more effective interpretive tools, fostering discussion.

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Both specialist comment that at national and regional levels the fire program in the midwest region has not considered the true time commitment and mitigation processes necessary to mitigate cultural resource concerns and allow for the NHPA section 106 to have time to compete processess. Both specialists are discouraged to hear comments like, "we have the money to treat acres and nothing but the weather is gonna stop us." Compliance dollars for each allocated RX burn should be increased and funded up front.

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I must admit that I, as a career Interpreter, have some concerns with the national program. The situation, as I see it, is that we have Fire Management and Interpretation traveling down parallel roads. The end goals are the same, but I am not sure that having a separate function within fire management targeted at education is the best way to accomplish the goals. Why not provide the Divisions of Interpretation/Resource Education with the means to accomplish the goals. In other words, funding provided to Interpretation specifically earmarked for Fire education/information could accomplish the goals. The benefit, as I see it, would be that the function would be accomplished using the resources and skills of trained, professional Interpreters. Fire would be better integrated into the overall park program rather than fragmented from it. An integrated approach could only be beneficial in economy and effectiveness and would present the topic of fire as being one part of the total park story, not a stand alone, unrelated topic. Let Interpretation do the job that it is charged with doing, interpreting the whole, rather than parts. Interpreting critical resource issues, such as Fire, have always been a responsibility of Interpretation. Given the resources to do that job properly, it would be done well and the NPS and the public would only benefit.

**5. From an outsider's perspective, what were the most notable successes that the program accomplished at your site that others may learn from? Please explain.**

I believe the Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps that XXX hosted with XXX's guidance was a huge success. I would love to see something similar in the future for "preaching the Natural Fire gospel".

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The interagency effort with the SCA crews working with the public in the Urban/Interface areas, there was such a tremendous appreciation of the work completed by these young adults by the public that they interacted with.

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XXX, our local specialist, was instrumental in coordinating and overseeing our work with SCA last summer. The SCA piece of our WUI program was very important. It provided a direct link to the program for a larger number of citizens than ever before. This part of our program has inspired us to bring SCA back to our community to continue this work.

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Outreach. The program is making a difference in our local community. People are slowly realizing that park lands must burn to be healthy and that fires are inevitable, particularly with modern fuel loads.

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The messaging system XXX created has been a great success. Also interaction with the development of the Visitor Center exhibits .

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I'm not sure I understand the "outsider's perspective" part but one of our biggest successes has been to improve and expand the park's relationship with local fire agencies, homeowners associations and the firesafe council.

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During past controlled burns or after a wildfire, developing effective outreach and interpretive tools to enlist public support. We have a strong track record doing this at XXX.

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The need to work as a team keeps coming up on the unit from *myself* and these specialists. I have advocated this from day one. This unit is micromanaged and small minded. They have some team dynamic challenges.

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There appeared to be great strides in integrating the NPS fire management program with those in other nearby agencies relating to education and information efforts. The Fire Education, Prevention and Information Specialist was very cooperative and easy to work with, resulting in acceptance by other divisions and park personnel.

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Open lines of communication with community leaders and community organizations.  
Conducting media tours of proactive fire prevention in the park. Partnering with other agencies to relay the fire education/fire prevention messages.

**6. From an outsider's perspective, what were some of the most difficult challenges the program faced and how were they overcome? Please explain.**

I know there were a few hiccups in the SCA program, but as far as I know XXX worked them out – not sure how!

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Here at XXX, I believe a major challenge is the need to get out the media releases when it looks like we will be getting a window to do a burn, and then something happens that the burn does not occur. That's got to be difficult for XXX as well as the public!

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The most difficult challenges from my perspective as a Forest Service Fire Officer with a limited staff and dealing with the National Fire Plan and the 31 action items that needed to be addressed from the 30 mile incident was giving the attention to the program that it deserved. The success of this program was as I stated before was the efforts put forward by employee hired by XXX in the Fire Education/Prevention position.

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Time, time, time, and oh yeah money. We have a short period of time during the year in which a WUI program can be most effective. Our winters are long and folks forget that they may have some fuel issues. The time it takes to plan, coordinate and launch a program is usually pretty tight. Our group solved these issues by supporting each other with time and money. Lots of phone time was spent on the problem areas, which left meeting time to work on the meat of the program.

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The toughest challenge is people's long-standing fear of fire and of the government. This is very hard to overcome. Regular, relentless education is the only real hope, and now, thanks to this program, we are well down this road.

- Sheer immensity of implementing a program in its pilot year in a physically huge region during a busy fire season was the challenge. - Resolved by triage and follow up (localized) strategic planning. During the fire season the Specialist had to evaluate what the program priorities were when being faced with a plethora of requests.
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Probably, balancing the time spent on different projects. Having clear direction and goals for the program. It is always difficult to start a new program. But XXX's enthusiasm and abilities have overcome these problems.

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Again, this is from my own perspective. We learned that it is much too complicated to have a community project that overlaps into federal lands. We learned that every project needs

outreach. And that sometimes public outreach on a project can not only energize the public but also result in a change of scope of the project based on their ideas and concerns. The challenge for us then is to find the funding to keep the project going. We have not been successful in seeking supplemental funding from the program. This leaves the public informed, but confused and frustrated with what they saw as a federal commitment to address a fire hazard.

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Not enough staff.

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The RX program directly impacts cultural resources and has little funding for NEPA compliance and NHPA sec 106 consultation.

Some were overcome by utilization of partnerships with University of XXX. A realization that better planning, defined timelines and regional leadership support was needed.

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I do not have the information to answer this question.

**7. What issues were not resolved to your satisfaction and need further review? What is your recommendation for resolution?**

None that I know of. I'm EXTREMELY pleased that XXX is part of our staff!

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I cannot recall issues that were not resolved or that needs further review.

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I believe that the majority of issues with the program were resolved. We communicate with each other well. We each take responsibility for the overall program and with that buy-in issues are resolved quickly and efficiently.

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We are satisfied. It is great to see the program grow and expand. It is model for other park educational efforts.

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Some of the educational materials coming out of the program have me a little baffled. The most prominent thing that comes to mind in this realm is the little grass-growing buffalo. It seems to be quite a stretch to me to make an association with fire. I think that stretch might be a little too much for an 8-year old. What is the message we're trying to send? Growing plants? Buffalo eating grass? I think that perhaps some of these items should be "field tested" before going wholesale. As the frontline distributor (with limited office space), I don't have much tolerance of things that are a "hard sell", and when I receive a surprise package of grass-growing buffalo, I get a little turned off, especially when there isn't much applicability to the regional fire setting.

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Good start for a first year, hope XXX and XXX will work more closely in the future.

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Both specialists agreed that Superintendent interaction and truthing of feasibility of accomplishing compliance before RX projects are assigned to the park unit.